

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 03499 01 OF 02 061609Z

43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 3499

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PGOV, UR, EAGR, EIND, ETRD,

SUBJ: 25TH CONGRESS, THE CONGRESS OF NO SURPRISES: WRAP-UP OF DOMESTI

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 03499 01 OF 02 061609Z

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POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

REF: 75 MOSCOW 15192

1. SUMMARY - AS EXPECTED, THE 25TH CONGRESS WAS THOROUGHLY DOMINATED BY BREZHNEV, AND HIGHLIGHTED THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES THAT HAVE COME TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH HIM. THE IMAGE THAT THE CONGRESS PROJECTED -- UNDOUBTEDLY THANKS TO CAREFUL ADVANCE PLANNING -- WAS, AS BREZHNEV TERMED IT IN HIS MARCH 5 CLOSING SPEECH, "UNITY, OPTIMISM, LOVE OF PEACE, AND STABILITY." THE UNDERLYING THEME OF THE AFFAIR WAS BASIC CONTINUITY IN BOTH POLICY AND PERSONNEL. THE FEW CHANGES PROPOSED OR IMPLIED FOR THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM DEALT WITH IMPLEMENTATION RATHER THAN BASIC DIRECTIONS. ESSENTIALLY NEW DEVELOPMENTS CAME ONLY ON THE LAST DAY, WHEN ROMANOV, USTINOV AND ALIYEV (AS CANDIDATE MEMBER) WERE ADDED TO THE POLITBURO, POLYANSKIY WAS DROPPED, AND ZIMYANIN AND CHERNENKO WERE BROUGHT INTO THE CC SECRETARIAT. OUR PERLIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THESE PERSONNEL CHANGES IS REPORTED SEPARATELY, AS IN OUR OVERVIEW THE CONGRESS' FOREIGN POLICY ASPECTS. DETAILS OF THE FINAL THREE DAYS OF THE CONGRESS ARE ALSO THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE REPORT. END SUMMARY.

2. WE NOTED IN MOSCOW 3352 THE EXTENT OF BREZHNEV'S DOMINATION OF THE 25TH CONGRESS, AND THIS DID NOT CHANGE IN THE LAST THREE DAYS OF THE EVENT. SPEAKERS IN THE MARCH 3 DISCUSSION OF KOSYGIN'S REPORT PRAISED BREZHNEV ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN SET DURING THE "DEBATE" OF HIS CC REPORT; HE WAS FEATURED IN TV COVERAGE OF THE GALA CONCERT FOR CONGRESS DELEGATES MARCH 4; AND HE CHAIRED AND WAS THE SOLE SPEAKER AT THE MARCH 5 CONCLUDING SESSION. THE STYLE AS WELL AS THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS WORK WAS APPROVED BY VIRTUALLY ALL WHO SPOKE. AND THE FEW CHANGES IN THE LEADERSHIP, PARTICULARLY THE PROMOTIONS OF ROMANOV AND ALIYEV, SUGGESTED A FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF HIS POSITION. WHILE THE 25TH CONGRESS MAY, FOR REASONS OF AGE AND HEALTH, BE BREZHNEV'S LAST, THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT HE IS NOW REGARDED AS A LAME DUCK. TO THE CONTRARY, HE EMERGES FROM THE CONGRESS WITH DRAMATIC PUBLIC ACCLAIM FOR HIS PREEMINANCE, WITH NEW SUPPORTERS IN TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, AND WITH AS MUCH OF A "MANDATE" AS COULD BE GIVEN HIM BY THE CONGRESS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 03499 01 OF 02 061609Z

SHORT OF CREATION OF A FULL-BLOWN "CULT OF PERSONALITY." THE PUBLIC IMAGE HE HIMSELF PROJECTED IN HIS INITIAL REPORT WAS THAT OF SENIOR STATESMAN AND LAWGIVER, AMONG WHOSE CULMINATING ACTS WOULD BE TO BESTOW A NEW CONSTITUTION AND CODE OF LAWS UPON THE NATION.

3. REGARDING THE PARTY ITSELF, THE IMPLICATION IN BREZHNEV'S CC REPORT AND IN SUBSEQUENT SPEECHES WAS THAT REMNANTS OF THE

CULT OF PERSONALITY OF STALIN AND THE "SUBJECTIVISM AND VOLUNTARISM" OF KHRUSHCHEV (ALTHOUGH NEITHER FORMER LEADER WAS NAMED) HAVE ONCE AND FOR ALL BEEN ELIMINATED, AND A NEW, "LENINIST" SPIRIT PREVAILING IN THE PARTY. THE LEADING ROLE OF THE PARTY IN SOVIET SOCIETY WAS EMPHASIZED, ALTHOUGH BREZHNEV AND MANY REGIONAL PARTY SPEAKERS TENDED TO TREAT THE CPSU AS AN ENTITY SEPARATE FROM THE ECONOMIC APPARATUS -- AND TO BLAME THE LATTER FOR ECONOMIC SHORTCOMINGS.

4. THE FACT THAT THE "DEBATE" SPEECHES, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF REPUBLIC PARTY FIRST SECRETARIES, CONTAINED NUMEROUS DIFFERENCES OF STRESS AND NUANCE, AND OCCASIONAL SHARP DEPARTURES FROM THE NORM, RAISES THE QUESTION OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH THEY WERE EXPRESSIONS OF INDIVIDUAL OPINION, AS OPPOSED TO PARTS OF A CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED WHOLE. ASSUMING THAT BREZHNEV CONTINUES TO BE A PRACTITIONER OF CONSENSUS POLITICS WITHIN THE PARTY, AND THAT HIS SUCCESS IN DOMINATING THE CONGRESS WAS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BECAUSE HE TAKES THE VIEWS OF OTHERS INTO ACCOUNT, IT WOULD FOLLOW THAT THE SPEECHES MAY HAVE REFLECTED A DEGREE OF INDIVIDUAL OPINION RELATED TO ISSUES, POLICIES AND PRIORITIES. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT BREZHNEV WAS PRESENTED WITH SUBSTANTIVE SURPRISES: THERE MUST HAVE BEEN PRIOR DISCUSSION AND CLEARANCE OF TEXTS. BUT THIS WOULD NOT OF ITSELF NECESSARILY PRECLUDE THE AIRING OF SOME DIFFERENCES. (OF COURSE THE STRUCTURE OF THE SPEECHES WAS PREDICTABLE, AND MUCH OF THE CONTENT CLEARLY WAS COORDINATED IN ADVANCE -- FOR EXAMPLE, CRITICISM OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND POSSIBLY KUNAYEV'S TRAIL BALLOON REGARDING GREATER FLEXIBILITY TOWARD CHINA.)

5. TREATMENT OF SOVIET SOCIETY BY THE CONGRESS WAS UNINSPIRED AND BROKE LITTLE NEW GROUND. BREZHNEV EMPHASIZED THE GOAL-DIRECTED NATURE OF THE SYSTEM AND THE IMPORTANCE IN THIS

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PAGE 04 MOSCOW 03499 01 OF 02 061609Z

CONTEXT OF MARXISM-LENINISM. THE THEMES OF DISCIPLINE AND PERSONAL OBLIGATION TO THE STATE WERE ALSO STRESSED. YET BREZHNEV ALSO SPOKE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM FOR THE RIGHTS OF SOVIET CITIZENS AS WELL AS FOR THE INTERESTS OF SOVIET SOCIETY, AND NOTED THAT THE STATE SECURITY ORGANS "CARRY ON ALL THEIR WORK, WHICH TAKES PLACE UNDER THE PARTY'S GUIDANCE AND UNFLAGGING CONTROL, IN THE LIGHT OF THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE STATE . . . AND WITH STRICT OBSERVANCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL RULES AND SOVIET LEGALITY." STRONG WORDS ABOUT SOCIALIST REALISM, DISSIDENTS, AND IDEOLOGICAL ENEMIES ABROAD WERE LEFT FOR SUBSEQUENT SPEAKERS (SEVERAL OF OUR DISSIDENT SOURCES FELT THIS WAS DONE SO THAT BREZHNEV WOULD NOT BE ASSOCIATED IN THE EYES OF WESTERN OBSERVERS WITH A HARD LINE TOWARD INTERNAL DISSENT).

6. ALTHOUGH POLITICAL DOCTRINE WAS FREQUENTLY STRESSED BY BREZHNEV -- INDEED HE DEVOTED A SECTION OF HIS SPEECH TO "IDEOLOGICAL EDUCATION" -- NEITHER HE NOR SUBSEQUENT SPEAKERS HAD FRESH IDEAS ABOUT MARXISM-LENINISM PER SE. EXISTING IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS -- SUCH AS "DEVELOPED SOCIALIST SOCIETY," "THE GENERAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM", OR "THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT" -- WERE NOT INFUSED WITH NEW CONTENT OR SUPPLEMENTED BY NEW CONCEPTS. YET THERE WAS NO HINT OF DECREASED EMPHASIS ON IDEOLOGICAL CONFORMITY; BREZHNEV, ECHOED BY OTHER SPEAKERS, CALLED FOR "CONSTANT POLITICAL VIGILANCE" AND "TIMELY REBUFFS TO HOSTILE IDEOLOGICAL SUBVERSIONS" IN THE "STRUGGLE BETWEEN IDEOLOGIES."

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 03499 02 OF 02 061626Z

43

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 3499

7. WE DO NOT SEE THE CONGRESS AS NECESSARILY PROTENDING A
SHIFT TOWARD MORE RIGID INTERNAL CONTROLS, WITH UNFAVORABLE
IMPLICATIONS FOR EMIGRATION AND DISSENT. SOVIET JEWISH AND
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 03499 02 OF 02 061626Z

DISSIDENT SOURCES WE THUS FAR HAVE POLLED TEND TO FEEL THAT
EMPHASIS ON "OLD TIME RELIGION" IS TO BE EXPECTED AT A PARTY
CONGRESS, AND THE 25TH HAS NO PARTICULAR IMPLICATIONS FOR THEM
ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. THIS STRIKES US AS A REASONABLE ASSESS-
MENT.

8. ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, BASIC POLICIES OF THE 23RD AND
24TH CONGRESSES WERE ENDORSED BY THE 25TH AND, WITH WHAT APPEAR
TO BE ONLY MINOR ALTERATIONS IN FORM, WILL BE CONTINUED.
DESPITE BREZHNEV'S STRONG CRITICISM OF THOSE INVOLVED WITH
CONSUMER GOODS, AND HIS CALL AND THAT OF OTHERS FOR IMPROVE-
MENTS IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY IN THIS FIELD, HEAVY
INDUSTRY RETAINS ITS POSITION OF UNCHALLENGED PRIORITY.

9. EFFORTS TO OVERCOME PERENNIAL AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS WILL
CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON HEAVY INVESTMENTS RATHER THAN FUNDAMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES, ALTHOUGH JUDGING FROM SPEECHES BY
REGIONAL PARTY OFFICIALS THE PROGRAM OF COORDINATING
AGRICULTURE WITH LOCAL INDUSTRIES WAS ENDORSED AND EVIDENTLY
WILL CONTINUE APACE. MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE NEW FIVE YEAR PLAN'S
"QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS" FORMULA -- INCLUDING PRODUCTION
ASSOCIATIONS, EXPANDED USE OF COMPUTERS AND OTHER ADVANCED
TECHNOLOGY, EXPANSION AND RECONSTRUCTION IN LIEU OF EXCESSIVE
NEW CONSTRUCTION, IMPROVED STANDARDS AND SLIGHT CHANGES IN
CENTRAL PLANNING -- ARE MORE ACCURATELY DESCRIBED AS NORMAL
EVOLUTION OF PAST POLICIES RATHER THAN AS SIGNIFICANT INNOVA-
TIONS.

10. TREATMENT OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS WAS RELATIVELY
INNOVATIVE. IN ADDITION TO CALLING FOR FURTHER CEMA INTERGRA-
TION AND INCREASED TRADE WITH DEVELOPED "CAPITALIST" COUNTRIES,
BOTH BREZHNEV AND KOSYGIN STRESSED DEVELOPMENT OF "NEW FORMS"
OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC TIES, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO INCREASED
USE OF "COMPENSATION AGREEMENTS" IN PURCHASING CAPITAL EQUIP-
MENT FROM THE INDUSTRIAL WEST, INCREASED SOVIET PARTICIPATION

IN "CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS" IN WESTERN COUNTRIES, AND EVEN
CREATION OF SPECIAL EXPORT INDUSTRIES IN THE USSR. A NEW
DRIVE FOR BETTER MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION OF THE ENTIRE
FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS SECTOR WAS ALSO INDICATED.

1. TO SUM UP: IN HIS CONCLUDING SPEECH MARCH 5 BREZHNEV
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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 03499 02 OF 02 061626Z

NOTED THAT EACH CPSU CONGRESS PROVIDED A SPECIAL LANDMARK IN
SOVIET HISTORY. HIS CHARACTERIZATION OF THE 25TH WAS "A
CONGRESS OF GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, UNDER THE BANNER OF REALISM
AND EFFICIENCY, QUIET CONFIDENCE IN OUR STRENGTH, CONFIDENCE
IN NEW VICTORIES FOR OUR GREAT CAUSE, CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNISM,
AND IN OUR STRUGGLE FOR A DURABLE, JUST PEACE ON EARTH." THIS
PROBABLY IS THE GENUINE VIEW OF BREZHNEV AND HIS SENIOR
COLLEAGUES. BUT A SHORTER AND MORE APT CHARACTERIZATION MIGHT
BE "A CONGRESS OF NO SURPRISES." IN ANY CASE, OUR GUESS
WOULD BE THAT THE 25TH WILL PROBABLY GO DOWN AS ONE OF THE
LEAST SIGNIFICANT CONGRESS IN SOVIET HISTORY.

12. FAR-REACHING SOLUTIONS OF FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS WERE NOT
PUT FORWARD AT THIS CONGRESS. THE AGING, CONSERVATIVE NATURE
OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP WAS, IF ANYTHING, SLIGHTLY INCREASED: A
RELATIVELY YOUNG POLITBURO MEMBER, POLYANSKIY, WAS OUSTED; AND
THE YOUTH AND REPUTEDLY DYNAMIC VIEWS OF ONE NEW POLITBURO
MEMBER, ROMANOV, WERE COUNTERBALANCED BY THE AGE AND
LENGTH OF SERVICE AT THE CENTER OF THE OTHER, USTINOV. ROMANOV
NOW JOINS THE SMALL GROUP OF YOUNGER MEM -- INCLUDING KULAKOV,
MAZUROV, AND SHCHERBITSKIY -- WITH FULL POLITBURO MEMBER-
SHIP AND THEREFORE GOOD POSITION TO ADVANCE TO THE TOP WHEN
THE SENIOR OLIGARCHS BEGIN TO STEP ASIDE. BUT THE
SUCCESSION PROBLEM APPARENTLY WAS NOT ADDRESSED AT THIS
GATHERING, AND THE LINES OF ITS EVENTUAL RESOLUTION REMAIN
UNCLEAR.
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